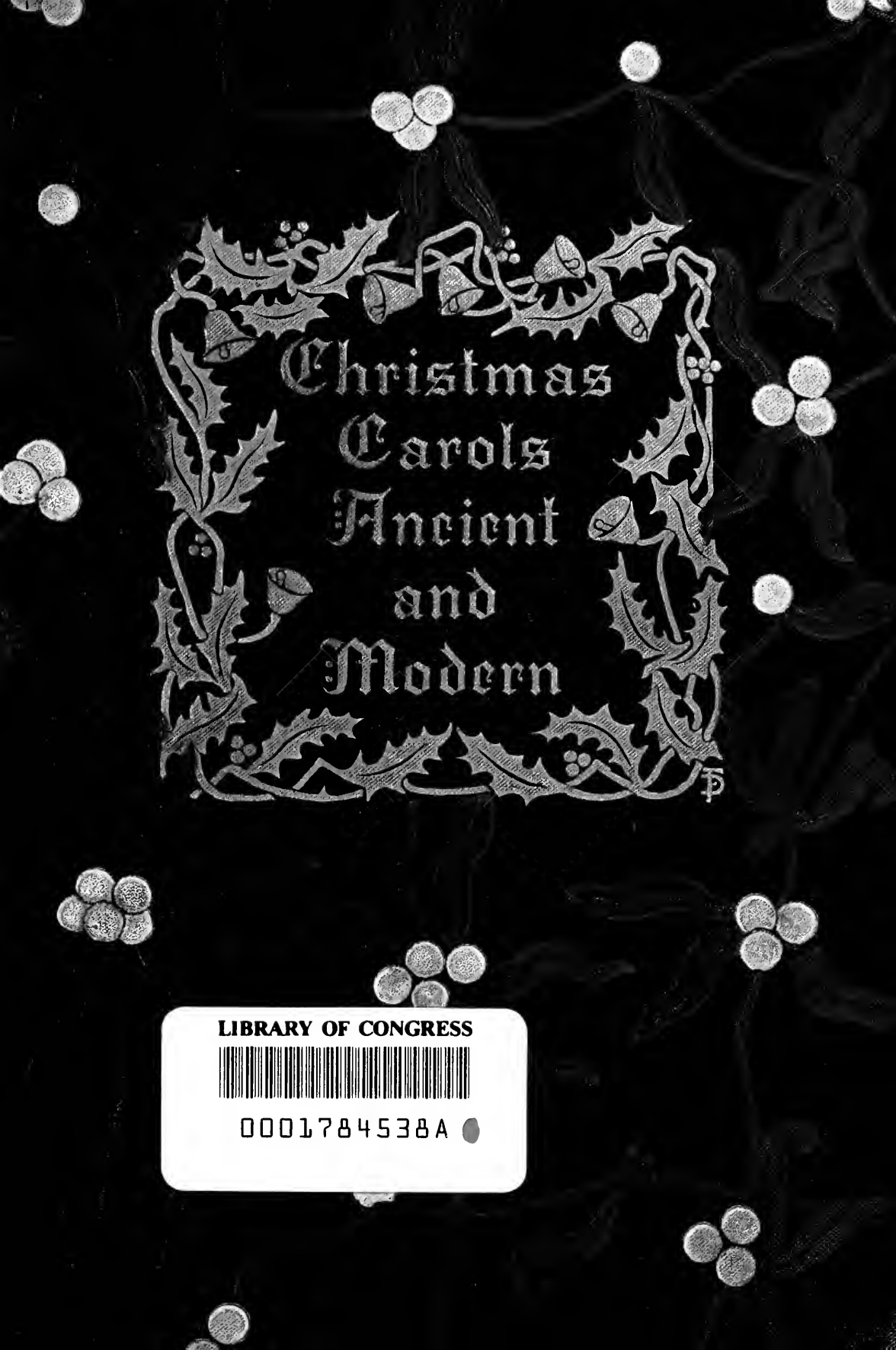

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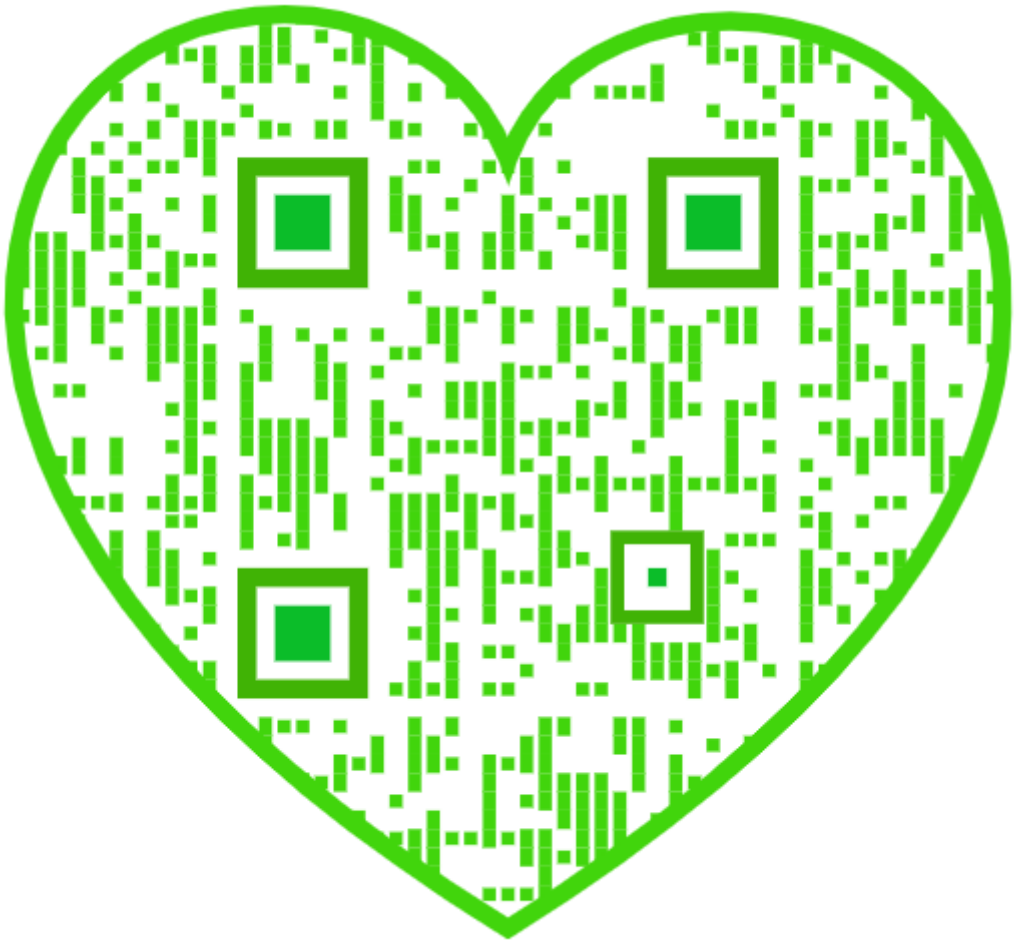

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Christmas Carols

ANCIENT AND MODERN

Edited with Notes by

JOSHUA SYLVESTRE

With Illustrations

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INTRODUCTION.

SOME years ago I walked down to Seven Oaks, in Kent, to enjoy the blessed Christmas. This village is one of a few in the vicinity of London uncontaminated by a railway with its crowd of giddy visitors from the great city.

I had just returned from abroad, after a long residence there, and even the minor observances and customs of the season possessed a pleasing novelty and charm. As I passed through Bromley I observed the shops, filled with viands for the great yearly feast, decorated with the emblems of the season.

The little cottage on the road-side had its sprigs of holly in the window, and ruddy children stood at the door with faces that betokened how near was the general holiday. As I drew toward my destination I occasionally passed a peasant carrying the, to him, sumptuous meal

for the morrow—perhaps the bountiful gift of the good lady at the manor-house—or bearing on his shoulder a block to light up his cottage hearth in honor of Christmas-tide. I could not help thinking, as I moved along, that on the eve of this glorious day all nature seemed to sink into repose after the labors and storms of the past year.

The quiet village of Seven Oaks exhibited that neat and cleanly aspect so often admired by visitors to this country when passing through our more orderly rural districts. The trimmed hedgerows, whitened door-steps, and glistening window-panes, with the prim and happy old people passing about making preparations for the morrow, pictured forth a delightful scene of order and contentment.

Fatigued with my walk, I retired to rest early. A bright moon was shining into my chamber, and through the window I could see lights moving about the apartments of Knowle House,[1]

[1] The magnificent seat of the Earl Amherst, formerly the residence of the Sackvilles, Dukes of Dorset. The house covers upwards of five acres of ground, and furnishes specimens of the architecture of various ages.

a short distance across the park, indicating that the great people were also preparing for the mirthful time. I had not been in the room very long before my ears were saluted by a sweet music of youthful voices. Opening the casement I found some young villagers singing a carol. The tune was plaintive, and simple in the extreme, and appeared to harmonize exactly with the scene and the occasion. It was the old carol of "God rest you, Merry Gentlemen," and if a critic should aver that the piece was more appropriate for the following day, I can only say that the melody sounded very delightful on that still and frosty night. After a time the little folks withdrew, and I heard their voices in the distance, apparently not far from a neighboring farm-house. As Irving remarked on a similar occasion, the notes of the carolists as they receded became more soft and aerial, and seemed to accord with quiet and moonlight. I listened and listened; they became more and more tender and remote; and, as they gradually died away, my head sunk upon my pillow, and I fell asleep. In the early morning my window

was again saluted by a joyous song, and going to it I discovered two young men and three girls "welcoming with sweet music the blessed morn."

Such is a brief narrative of Christmas associations that I always remember with pleasure. Although personal, I trust these reminiscences will be considered a not inappropriate introduction to our subject.

Christmas carols doubtless had their origin in that celestial music which Milton describes in his "Hymn to the Nativity":

> "Such music (as 'tis said)
> Before was never made
> But when of old the sons of morning sung,
> While the Creator great
> His constellation set."

The oldest religious hymns, sung by the early Christians in the centuries immediately following Christ's death, have not been handed down to us. The most ancient carols that we now possess date from the Middle Ages, and consist generally of portions of miracle plays, religious spectacles, and old religious legends.

Thus one miracle play, the most popular, perhaps, of any of these biblical representations, "The Creation of the World," has supplied several carols. It was acted in London so late as the reign of Queen Anne. The introduction in the same performance of Adam and Eve, Herod, and the Duke of Marlborough, cannot be considered as good taste, however much the blending of antediluvian with current history may have contributed to fill Mr. Heatly's purse. The handbill to the performance reads thus—I have italicised those scenes which now form the subject of carols:

BY HER MAJESTIE'S PERMISSION.

AT HEATLY'S BOOTH,

Over against the Cross Daggers, next to Mr. Miller's Booth: During the time of Bartholomew fair, will be presented a little Opera, call'd *The Old Creation of the World*, newly reviv'd, with the addition of the Glorious Battle obtained over the French and Spaniards by his Grace the Duke of Marlborough.

THE CONTENTS ARE THESE.

1. The Creation of Adam and Eve.
2. The intreagues of Lucifer in the Garden of Eden.
3. Adam and Eve driven out of Paradise.

4. Cain going to plow, Abel driving sheep.
5. Cain killeth his brother Abel.
6. Abraham offering his son Isaac.
7. *Three Wisemen of the East guided by a Star, who worship him.*
8. *Joseph and Mary flee away by night upon an ass.*
9. *King Herod's Cruelty, his men's spears laden with children.*
10. *Rich Dives invites his friends, and orders his porter to keep the beggars from his gate.*
11. *Poor Lazarus comes a begging at rich Dives' gate, the dogs lick his sores.*
12. *The good angel and death contend for Lazarus' life.*
13. *Rich Dives is taken sick and dieth, he is buried in great solemnity.*
14. *Rich Dives in Hell, and Lazarus in Abraham's bosom*, seen in a most glorious object, all in machines, descending in a throne, guarded with multitudes of angels, with the breaking of the clouds, discovering the palace of the Sun, in double and treble prospects, to the admiration of the spectators.

In the early ages the bishops were accustomed on Christmas Day to sing carols among the clergy.

Some of the legendary carols are very beautiful, and shadow forth the true spirit of our most admired ballad poetry. That entitled the

"Holy Well," I would beg to bring forward as a specimen. Although a fragment of an old monkish sermon, or, perhaps, the story of a priest to his simple audience, it is, to my thinking, full of poesy and fine feeling. Jesus, when young, had the ideas and youthful tastes of other children. One day he obtained permission of his mother to play with some little children down by the Holy Well. The juveniles proved to be "lords' and ladies'" sons, and knowing the poverty of Jesus' parents, they objected to his company, and twitted him with the meanness of his birth. Nothing can be more natural than the anger of the indignant mother upon learning the insult. She knows the mighty power of her heavenly boy, but the feelings of a wounded mother's pride are too strong to be suppressed, and she calls upon her son to punish them with his terrible malediction. Jesus' answer is soft and beautiful:

"Nay, nay," sweet Jesus mildly said,
"Nay, nay, that must not be,
For there are too many sinful souls
Crying out for the help of me."

Books of carols were cried about the streets of Paris as early as the thirteenth century. In this country we know, from some fragments preserved in the public libraries, that they were published by the first printers.

There also exist numerous old MSS. containing ancient carols; but these, although they delighted our forefathers when sung by the minstrels, are now almost forgotten. In the time of Henry VIII. and down to the early years of the reign of Charles I., carols were general at the festive season. When the Puritans came into power, however, an act of parliament was passed, "That no observation shall be had of the 25th day of December, commonly called Christmas Day," and the consequence was that carols fell into disuse. At the Restoration they once more came into public favor; but, owing to the fondness of Charles for worldly enjoyment, the carols that were composed and sung at this period are more frequently the subject of noisy mirth and festivity than religion. From this date to the present time the popularity of these joyous songs has been on the wane.

Fashions have changed, and tastes have altered; and in this age of giddy excitement people appear to prefer novelty and flippant amusement to the innocent and delightful pastime of their ancient fathers.

Forty years ago an antiquary wrote complainingly: "Carols begin to be spoken of as not belonging to this century, and yet no one, as I am aware of, has attempted a collection of these fugitives." Several gleaners since then, however, have entered the field. Mr. Davies Gilbert, Mr. Sandys, Dr. Rimbault, and Mr. Thomas Wright have each garnered their gleanings into little volumes. From these I have derived much assistance in the compilation of the present work.

Much more could have been said in this introduction relative to the history of carols than has been attempted, but the remarks prefixed to each carol will be found to contain many particulars concerning our subject. With regard to the date of these pieces, most of them may be pronounced ancient—if not in composition, yet in subject.

The Editor is aware that many of the carols represent the most indifferent poetry. He was prevailed upon to include them in the collection for various reasons,—their earnest simplicity, the old religious stories they frequently contained, together with a considerable respect for that general favor which for many generations has been accorded to them by all classes.

CHRISTMAS CAROLS.

"IN EXCELSIS GLORIA."

[BISHOP TAYLOR was of the opinion that the "Gloria in Excelsis," the hymn sung by the angels to the Shepherds at our Lord's Nativity, was the earliest Christmas carol. It is preserved in an old MS. among the Harleian collection in the British Museum, supposed to have been written about the year 1500. In English carols of this antiquity Latin words and even whole lines are freely interlarded. They are composite or macaronic in their language; and the refrain of this curious piece, "*In Excelsis Gloria*"—Glory in the highest—is retained in its original form, doubtless from its analogy to the "gloria" which the priests were accustomed to intone at the altar.

The "Gloria in Excelsis" is sung in Roman Catholic chapels on the Holy Thursday, Holy Saturday, and at midnight on Christmas Even, and then again at eleven o'clock on Christmas Morning.]

WHEN Christ was born of Mary free,
In Bethlehem in that fair citie,
Angels sang there with mirth and glee,
In Excelsis Gloria!

Herdsmen beheld these angels bright,
To them appearing with great light,
Who said, "God's Son is born this night,"
In Excelsis Gloria!

This King is come to save mankind,
As in Scripture truths we find,
Therefore this song have we in mind,
In Excelsis Gloria!

Then, dear Lord, for Thy great Grace,
Grant us the bliss to see Thy face,
That we may sing to Thy solace,
In Excelsis Gloria!

WELCOME YULE.

[THIS early carol (temp. Henry VI.) given by Ritson in his "Ancient Songs and Ballads," with its mixture of Scriptural allusions and invitations to worldly enjoyment, was, doubtless, one of those sung by the tribe of professional minstrels during the several periods of feasting into which the day of Yule was divided. It was thought at first that it could scarcely be classed as religious, yet was that element found so predominant that it has been included in this part.]

WELCOME be thou heavenly King;
Welcome, born on this morning,
Welcome, for whom we shall sing
Welcome Yule.[1]

Welcome be ye Stephen and John,
Welcome Innocents every one,
Welcome Thomas Martyr one,
Welcome Yule.

Welcome be ye good New Year,
Welcome Twelfth day both in fere,[2]
Welcome Saints loved and dear,
Welcome Yule.

[1] *Yule* is the Anglo-Saxon for Christmas.
[2] In company.

Welcome be ye Candlemass,
Welcome be ye Queen of Bliss,
Welcome both to more and less,[1]
Welcome Yule.

Welcome be ye that are here,
Welcome all, and make good cheer,
Welcome all, another year,
Welcome Yule.

[1] Great and small.

A CAROL ON THE BIRTH OF CHRIST.

[THIS carol was written by Thomas Tusser, the author of the well-known work on Husbandry. He was chorister and agriculturist by turns. The poems that he has left us are noted for their morality, piety, and benevolent simplicity. Tusser died in 1580.]

WAS not Christ our Saviour
Sent unto us from God above,
Not for our good behavior,
But only of His mercy and love?
If this be true, as true it is,
Truly indeed;
Great thanks to God to yield for this
Then had we need.

This did our God for very troth,
To train to Him the soul of man,
And justly to perform his oath
To Sarah, and to Abraham, than
That through his seed, all nations should
Most blessed be,
As in due time performed, He would
All flesh should see.

Which wondrously is brought to pass,
And in our sight already done,
By sending as His promise was
(To comfort us) His only Son,
Even Christ, I mean, that virgin's child
In Bethlehem born:
That Lamb of God, that Prophet mild,
With crowned thorn.

Such was His love, to save us all
From dangers of the curse of God,
That we stood in by Adam's fall,
And by our own deserved rod.
That through His blood and holy name,
All that believe,
And fly from sin, and abhor the same,
Shall grace receive.

For this glad news, this feast doth bring,
To God the Son and Holy Ghost,
Let man give thanks, rejoice and sing,
From world to world, from coast to coast,

For other gifts in many ways,
That God doth send:
Let us in Christ give God the praise,
Till life shall end.

CAROL, WITH LULLABY.

[THIS carol is taken from "Tenor Psalmes, Sonets, and Songs of Sadnes and Pietie, made into Musicke of Five Parts, &c. by William Byrd, one of the Gent. of the Queenes Maiestie's Royall Chappell, &c. London, 1587," and printed therefrom in "Cens. Liter." vol. x. pp. 187-8. Herod's cruel massacre is a common subject in children's carols.]

LULLA, la lulla, lulla lullaby,
My sweet little babe, what meanest thou to cry?
Be still, my blessed babe, though cause thou hast to mourn,
Whose blood, most innocent, the cruel king hath sworn:
And lo, alas, behold what slaughter he doth make,
Shedding the blood of infants all, sweet Saviour, for Thy sake,
A King is born, they say, which King this king would kill;
Oh wo, and woful heavy day, when wretches have their will.

Lulla, la lulla, lulla lullaby,
My sweet little babe, what meanest thou to cry?
Three kings this King of kings to see, are come from far,
To each unknown, with offerings great, by guiding of a star!
And Shepherds heard the song, which angels bright did sing,
Giving all glory unto God, for coming of this King.
Which must be made away, King Herod would Him kill;
Oh wo, and woful heavy day, when wretches have their will.

Lulla, la lulla, lulla lullaby,
My sweet little babe, what meanest thou to cry?
Lo, my little babe, be still, lament no more,
From fury shall thou step aside, help have we still in store;
We heavenly warning have, some other soil to seek,
From death must fly the Lord of Life, as lamb both mild and meek:

Thus must my babe obey the king that would
him kill;
Oh wo, and woful heavy day, when wretches
have their will.

Lulla, la lulla, lulla lullaby,
My sweet little babe, what meanest thou to
cry?
But thou shalt live and reign, as sybils have
foresaid,
As all the prophets prophesy, whose mother,
yet a maid,
And perfect virgin pure, with her breasts shall
up-breed
Both God and man, that all have made the Son
of heavenly seed;
Whom caitiffs none can 'tray, whom tyrants
none can kill,
Oh joy, and joyful happy day, when wretches
want their will.

NEW PRINCE, NEW POMP.

[ROBERT SOUTHWELL, the writer of the following poem, is chiefly remembered on account of his unfortunate fate. He was educated for the Catholic priesthood, and when young became a member of the Society of Jesus at Rome. After a time he returned to his own country in the character of a missionary. But he found the government adverse to his Order. For eight years he managed to escape the particular notice of the authorities, but at length he was arrested, and thrown into prison, where he endured the torture of the rack ten times. Eventually he was executed at Tyburn, February 21, 1595.]

BEHOLD a silly[1] tender Babe,
In freezing winter night,
In homely manger trembling lies;
Alas! a piteous sight.
The inns are full, no man will yield
This little Pilgrim bed;
But forced He is with silly beasts,
In crib to shroud His head.
Despise Him not for lying here,
First what He is inquire:

[1] This expression frequently occurs in ancient carols. It meant in those days *artless*, *simple*.

An orient pearl is often found
  In depth of dirty mire.
Weigh not His crib, His wooden dish,
  Nor beasts that by Him feed:
Weigh not His mother's poor attire,
  Nor Joseph's simple weed.
This stable is a Prince's court,
  The crib His chair of state;
The beasts are parcel of His pomp,
  The wooden dish His plate;
The persons in that poor attire,
  His royal liveries wear;
The Prince himself is come from Heaven,
  This pomp is prizèd there.
With joy approach, O Christian wight,
  Do homage to thy King;
And highly praise His humble pomp,
  Which He from Heaven doth bring.

FOR CHRISTMAS DAY.

[THIS Christmas hymn is by Bishop Hall, equally celebrated as an eminent divine, and a satiric poet. He was a contemporary of Shakespeare, Jonson, Spenser, and the other stars of the Elizabethan age.]

IMMORTAL Babe, who this dear day
Didst change Thine heaven for our clay,
And didst with flesh Thy godhead veil,
Eternal Son of God, all hail!

Thine, happy star, ye angels, sing
Glory on high to Heaven's King.
Run, shepherds, leave your nightly watch,
See heaven come down to Bethlehem's cratch.

Worship, ye sages of the east,
The King of God in meanness dressed.
O blessed maid, smile and adore
The God thy womb and arms have bore.

Star, angels, shepherds, and wild sages,
Thou virgin glory of all ages,
Restorèd frame of Heaven and Earth,
Joy in your dear Redeemer's birth!

THE SHEPHERDS' SONG.

[THIS carol, or Hymn for Christmas, as it is termed in the original, was composed by Edmund Bolton: it is reprinted from "England's Helicon," 1600.]

SWEET Music, sweeter far
Than any song is sweet.
Sweet music heavenly rare,
Mine ears, O peers, doth greet.
You gentle flocks—whose fleeces, pearled with dew,
Resemble Heaven, whom golden drops make bright—
Listen, O listen, now; O not to you
Our pipes make sport to shorten weary night,
But voices most divine
Make blissful harmony—
Voices that seem to shine;
For what else clears the sky?
Tunes can we hear, but not the singers see;
The tune's divine, and so the singers be.

Lo, how the firmament
Within an azure fold
The flock of stars hath pent,
That we might them behold.
Yet from their beams proceedeth not this light,
Nor can their crystals such reflection give.
What then doth make the element so bright?
The heavens are come down upon earth to live.
But hearken to the song,
Glory to glory's King,
And peace all men among,
These choristers do sing.
Angels they are, as also Shepherds, He
Whom in our fear we do admire to see.

"Let not amazement blind
Your souls," said he, "annoy:
To you and all mankind
My message bringeth joy.
For lo, the world's great Shepherd now is born,
A blessed babe, an Infant full of power:
After long night, up-risen is the morn,
Renowning Bethlehem in the Saviour.

Sprung is the perfect day,
By prophets seen afar,
Sprung is the perfect May,
Which Winter cannot mar."
In David's city doth this Sun appear,
Clouded in flesh, yet Shepherds sit we here.

CHRISTMAS TIDE.

[THIS song of Shakespeare, although a mere scrap, breathes a delightful spirit of fancy blended with religious feeling. It is to be regretted that the poet of all time has only left us a few fragments relating to our subject.]

SOME say that ever 'gainst that season comes,
Wherein our Saviour's birth is celebrated,
The bird of dawning singeth all night long:
And then, they say, no spirit dares stir abroad;
The nights are wholesome; then no planets strike,
No fairy takes, nor witch hath power to charm,
So hallowed, and so gracious is the

HYMN ON THE NATIVITY OF MY SAVIOUR.

[THE following carol, or hymn, was written by Ben Jonson, about the year 1600.]

I SING the birth was born to-night,
The author both of life and light;
The angel so did sound it,
And like the ravished shepherds said,
Who saw the light and were afraid,
Yet searched, and true they found it.

The Son of God th' Eternal King,
That did us all salvation bring,
And freed the soul from danger;
He whom the whole world could not take,
The Word, which heaven and earth did make,
Was now laid in a manger.

The Father's wisdom willed it so,
The Son's obedience knew no No,
Both wills were in one stature;

And as that wisdom had decreed,
The Word was now made Flesh indeed,
  And took on Him our nature.

What comfort by Him do we win,
Who made Himself the Prince of sin,
  To make us heirs of Glory!
To see this babe all innocence,
A martyr born in our defence:
  Can man forget this story?

THE ANGELS' SONG.

[WILLIAM DRUMMOND, of Hawthornden, the friend of Ben Jonson, was the author of the following sonnet. Jonson once trudged on foot to Scotland to see and converse with the man whom he had long known as a friendly correspondent. From Jonson's rude manners it does not appear that their mutual regard was enhanced.]

RUN, Shepherds, run where Bethlem blest appears,
We bring the best of news, be not dismayed:
A Saviour there is born, more old than years
Amidst Heaven's rolling heights this earth who stayed;
In a poor cottage inned, a Virgin Maid,
There is He poorly swaddled, in manger laid
A weakling did Him bear, who all upbears,
To whom too narrow swaddlings are our spheres:
Run, Shepherds, run, and solemnize His birth.
This is that night—no, day grown great with bliss,
In which the power of Satan broken is;

In Heaven be glory, peace unto the Earth,
Thus singing through the air the angels swam,
And cope of stars re-echoèd the same.

REMEMBER, O THOU MAN.

[THIS Christmas Carol is the last of the "Country Pastimes," in "Melismata: Musicall Phansies fitting the Court, Citie, and Country Humours," edited by Ravenscroft, 4to, 1611. It is paraphrased in "Ane compendious booke of Godly and Spirituall Songs . . . with sundrie . . . ballates changed out of prophaine Songes, &c.," printed by Andro Hart, in Edinburgh, 1621.

> Remember, man, remember, man,
> That I thy saull from Sathan wan,
> And has done for thee what I can, &c.

It was formerly believed that this piece contained the original of "God save the King."

Carols of this description, the writers of Elizabeth's reign denominated "Suffering Ballads."]

REMEMBER, O thou Man,
O thou Man, O thou Man,
Remember, O thou Man,
Thy time is spent.

Remember, O thou Man,
How thou camest to me then,
And I did what I can,
Therefore repent.

Remember Adam's fall,
O thou Man, O thou Man,
Remember Adam's fall
From Heaven to Hell.

Remember Adam's fall,
How we were condemned all
To Hell perpetual,
There for to dwell.

Remember God's goodness,
O thou Man, O thou Man,
Remember God's goodness
And promise made.

Remember God's goodness,
How he sent his Son, doubtless,
Our sins for to redress,
Be not afraid.

The Angels all did sing,
O thou Man, O thou Man,
The Angels all did sing
Upon the Shepherds' hill.

The Angels all did sing
Praises to our Heavenly King,
And peace to man living,
With right good will.

The Shepherds amazed were,
O thou Man, O thou Man,
The Shepherds amazed were
To hear the Angels sing.

The Shepherds amazed were
How this should come to pass,
That Christ our Messias
Should be our King.

To Bethlehem did they go,
O thou Man, O thou Man,
To Bethlehem did they go,
This thing to see.

To Bethlehem did they go,
To see whether it was so,
Whether Christ was born or no,
To set us free.

As the Angels before did say,
O thou Man, O thou Man,
As the Angels before did say,
So it came to pass.

As the Angels before did say,
They found him wrapt in hay
In a manger where he lay,
So poor he was.

In Bethlehem he was born,
O thou Man, O thou Man,
In Bethlehem he was born
For mankind dear.

In Bethlehem he was born
For us that were forlorn,
And therefore took no scorn
Our sins to bear.

In a manger laid he was,
O thou Man, O thou Man,
In a manger laid he was
At this time present.

In a manger laid he was
Between an ox and an ass,
And all for our trespass,
Therefore repent.

Give thanks to God alway,
O thou Man, O thou Man,
Give thanks to God alway,
With Hearts most joyfully:

Give thanks to God alway,
Upon this blessed day
Let all men sing and say
Holy, Holy.

A CHRISTMAS CAROL.

[AMONG all our English poets, the one who has left us by far the most complete contemporary picture of the Christmas season was a country clergyman of the reign of Charles I. who held a small living in a remote part of Devonshire. This was Robert Herrick, the author of "Hesperides," and of the following beautiful carol.]

Chorus.

WHAT sweeter music can we bring,
Than a carol, for to sing
The birth of this our Heavenly King?
Awake the voice! awake the string!
Heart, ear, and eye, and everything,
Awake! the while the active finger
Runs division with the singer.

I.

Dark and dull night, fly hence away,
And give the honor to this day,
That sees December turned to May.

II.

If we may ask the reason, say
The why, and wherefore all things here
Seem like the spring-time of the year?

III.

Why does the chilling winter's morn
Smile, like a field beset with corn?
Or smell, like to a mead new shorn,
Thus, on the sudden?

IV.

Come and see
The cause, why things thus fragrant be:
'Tis He is born, whose quickening birth
Gives life and lustre, public mirth,
To Heaven and the under Earth.

Chorus.

We see Him come, and know Him ours,
Who with His sunshine and His showers,
Turns all the patient ground to flowers.

I.

The Darling of the world is come,
And fit it is we find a room
To welcome Him.

II.

The nobler part
Of all the house here, is the heart.

Chorus.

Which we will give Him; and bequeath
This holly and this ivy wreath,
To do Him honor who's our King,
And Lord of all this revelling.

THE STAR SONG.

THE FLOURISH OF MUSICK; THEN FOLLOW THE SONG.

[THIS delightful carol is by the author of the preceding. The concluding lines, with their allusion to wassailing, represent very well the spirit of the season in old times,—a mixture of devotion and thankfulness, with a little worldly, yet harmless, rejoicing.]

I.

TELL us, thou clear and heavenly tongue,
Where is the Babe that lately sprung?
Lies He the lily-banks among?

II.

Or say, if this new Birth of ours
Sleeps, laid within some ark of flowers,
Spangled with dew-light? thou canst clear
All doubts, and manifest the where.

III.

Declare to us, bright star, if we shall seek
Him in the morning's blushing cheek,
Or search the beds of spices through,
To find Him out?

Star.

No, this ye need not do;
But only come and see Him rest,
A Princely Babe, in 's mother's breast.

Chorus.

He's seen! He's seen! why then around,
Let's kiss the sweet and holy ground;
And all rejoice that we have found
A King, before conception, crowned.

IV.

Come then, come then, and let us bring
Unto our pretty twelfth-tide King,
Each one his several offering.

Chorus.

And when night comes we'll give Him wassailing;
And that His treble honors may be seen,
We'll choose Him King, and make His mother queen.

AN ODE ON THE BIRTH OF OUR SAVIOUR.

[THIS also is from the pen of Herrick. The expression "scorn," in the fourth line, although sounding strangely to modern ears, is a term frequently to be met with in old popular literature. It occurs in "God rest you Merry Gentlemen," and other carols in this collection.]

IN numbers, and but these few,
I sing thy birth, O Jesu!
Thou pretty Baby, born here,
With sup'rabundant scorn here;
Who for Thy princely port here,
Hadst for Thy place
Of birth, a base
Out-stable for thy court here.

Instead of neat inclosures
Of interwoven osiers;
Instead of fragrant posies
Of daffodils, and roses;
Thy cradle, Kingly Stranger,
As Gospel tells,
Was nothing else
But, here, a homely manger.

But we with silks, not cruells,[1]
With sundry precious jewels,
And lily-work will dress Thee:
And as we dispossess Thee
Of clouds, we'll make a chamber,
Sweet Babe, for Thee
Of ivory,
And plastered round with amber.

The Jews, they did disdain Thee,
But we will entertain Thee
With glories to await here
Upon Thy princely state here;
And more for love than pity,
From year to year
We'll make Thee, here
A free-born of our city.

[1] Worsteds.

CHRISTMAS DAY.

[GEORGE WITHER, the author of the following carol, was both a poet and soldier in the time of the Civil Wars. In the former character, however, he is better known to posterity. His poems, of which he has left us several small volumes, are graceful and tender, and some of them are invariably included in all collections of old poetry. Mr. Russell Smith has recently reprinted, in a very handsome form, his "Hymns and Songs of the Church."]

AS on the night before this happy morn,
A blessed angel unto shepherds told,
Where (in a stable) He was poorly born,
Whom nor the earth, or heaven of heavens can hold:
Through Bethlem rung
This news at their return:
Yea, angels sung
That God with us was born;
And they made mirth because we should not mourn.

Their angel-carol sing we, then,
To God on high all glory be,
For peace on earth bestoweth He,
And showeth favor unto men.

This favor Christ vouchsafed for our sake;
To buy us thrones, He in a manger lay;
Our weakness took, that we His strength might take;
And was disrobed that He might us array;
Our flesh He wore,
Our sin to wear away;
Our curse He bore,
That we escape it may;
And wept for us, that we might sing for aye.

With angels, therefore, sing again,
To God on high all glory be;
For peace on earth bestoweth He,
And showeth favor unto men.

THE VIRGIN MOTHER.

[THE popularity of the following carol is the only excuse for its insertion here. The poetry is of the most poverty-stricken description—and yet there is a quaint earnestness that now and then arrests the reader's attention. Hone inserts it in his list, and the carol printers deem it sufficiently a favorite to reproduce it each Christmas.]

COME behold the Virgin Mother,
Fondly leaning on her child,
Nature shows not such another,
Glorious, holy, meek and mild:
Bethlehem's ancient walls enclose him,
Dwelling-place of David once;
Now no friendly homestead knows him,
Though the noblest of his sons.

Many a prophecy before him
Publish'd his bright advent long,
Guardian Angels low adore him
In a joyous heavenly song;
Eastern Sages see with wonder
His bright Star illume the sky,
O'er the volumes old they ponder,
Volumes of dark prophecy.

Royal Bethlehem how deserted,
All his pomp and splendor lost;
Is a stable, vile and dirty,
All the welcome you can boast?
Far they travel, oft enquiring
Where the wondrous babe is born:
On they come with great desiring,
Although others treat with scorn.

See, a babe of days and weakness
Heaven's Almighty now appears,
Liable to death and sickness,
Shame and agony and tears.
Sovereign he and great Creator,
He who form'd the heav'ns and earth
Yet takes on him human nature,
Angels wonder at his birth.

Why, ah, why this condescension,
God with mortal man to dwell?
Why lay by his grand pretension,
He who does all thrones excel?

'Tis to be a man, a brother,
With us sinners of mankind:
Vain we search for such another,
Ne'er we love like this shall find.

'Tis to make himself an offering
As a pure atoning lamb,
Souls redeeming by his suffering,
That in human flesh he came;
As a God he could not suffer,
He a body true must have;
As a man what he might offer
Could not satisfy or save.

Though an infant now you view him,
He shall fill his Father's throne,
Gather all the Nations to him;
Every knee shall then bow down:
Foes shall at his presence tremble,
Great and small, and quick and dead,
None can fly, none dare dissemble,
None find where to hide his head.

Friends! Oh then in cheerful voices
They shall shout with glad acclaim,
While each rising saint rejoices,
Saints of high or lowest fame.
Then what different appearing
We 'mong mortal tribes shall find;
Groaning those who now are sneering,
Triumphing the humble mind.

May we now, that day forestalling,
Hear the word, and read and pray,
Listen to the Gospel calling,
And with humble heart obey.
Give us hearty true repentance,
Live in faith and holiness;
Then we need not fear thy sentence,
But may trust thy saving grace,
Hallelujah, Hallelujah, Hallelujah,
Praise the Lord.

JOY TO THE WORLD.

[AMONG all the jubilant carols this is certainly the greatest favorite with the good people of Devon and Cornwall. The tune to which it is usually sung is very fine. The carol may date back to the beginning of the last century, but it is probably more recent.]

JOY to the world, the Lord is come,
Let earth receive her King;
Let every tongue with sacred mirth
His loud applauses sing.

Hark, hark, what news, what joyful news,
To all the nations round;
To-day rejoice, a King is born,
Who is with glory crown'd.

Behold! He comes, the tidings spread,
A Saviour full of grace:
He comes, in mercy, to restore
A sinful, fallen race.

HARK! THE HERALD ANGELS SING.

[THIS carol possesses none of the elements of the old legendary carols, yet, as one of the oldest and most popular religious hymns, a place is accorded to it here. Each Christmas it is invariably presented to us, with other favorites, by the singers and chapmen.]

HARK! the herald Angels sing,
Glory to the new-born King
Peace on earth and mercy mild,
God and sinner reconcil'd.
Hark! the herald Angels sing
Glory to the new-born King.

Joyful all ye nations rise,
Join the triumph of the skies,
With the angelic host proclaim,
Christ is born in Bethlehem.
Hark! the herald, etc.

Christ by highest Heaven ador'd,
Christ the everlasting Lord!

Late in time behold him come,
Offspring of a Virgin's womb.[1]
Hark! the herald, etc.

Hail the Heaven-born Prince of Peace!
Hail the Sun of Righteousness!
Light and life to all he brings,
Risen with healing in his wings.
Hark! the herald, etc.

Mild he lays his glory by,
Born that man no more may die,
Born to raise the sons of earth,
Born to give them second birth.
Hark! the herald, etc.

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[1] A broadside copy, printed at Hayle in Cornwall, gives another verse after this, but the lines appear to have been copied from some local hymn-book:

Veil'd in Flesh the Godhead he,
Hail th' incarnate Deity;
Pleas'd as man with man appear,
Jesus our Immanuel here.

WHILST SHEPHERDS WATCH'D.

[THIS piece enjoys great popularity in the rural districts. In the West it is frequently to be met with in the local hymn-books. It is probably not older than the last century.]

WHILST shepherds watch'd their flocks by night,
All seated on the ground,
The Angel of the Lord came down,
And glory shone around.

"Fear not," said he, for mighty dread
Had seized their troubled mind,
"Glad tidings of great joy I bring
To you and all mankind.

"To you in David's town this day
Is born of David's line
A Saviour, which is Christ the Lord;
And this shall be the sign,—

"The heavenly Babe you there shall find,
To human view display'd,
All meanly wrapped in swaddling bands,
And in a manger laid."

Thus spake the Seraph, and forthwith
Appeared a heavenly throng
Of Angels praising God, and thus
Address'd their joyful song:

"All glory be to God on high,
And to the earth be peace,
Good-will henceforth from Heav'n to men,
Begin and never cease. Hallelujah."

HARK! ALL AROUND THE WELKIN RINGS.

[THE use of the old Saxon word *welkin*, for heaven, or the sky, indicates the probable age of this piece. The term was occasionally used in poetry as late as the reign of Queen Anne.]

HARK! all around the welkin rings,
Bright Seraphs hail the morn,
That ushers in the King of Kings,
That saw a Saviour born.

Chorus.

Ye people on earth, your voices now raise,
To Christ our Redeemer, in carols of praise,
Hallelujah! praise the Lord, hallelujah!

Then shining heralds from on high
These joyful tidings bear,
With acclamations down the sky,
And humble shepherds hear;

"Glory to God, and peace to men,"
The heavenly choir did sing;
Let earth repeat the sound again,
And hail the new-born King.

This is the day our Lord did choose
To visit mortal man;
And from the bands of sin to loose
All those that trust in him.

Lord Jesus, let thy kingdom spread
Through all the earth below;
Let every land thy wonders read,
And thy salvation know.

Hosanna! let all the earth and heaven
Salute the happy morn;
To-day the promis'd child is given,
And God himself is born.

MORTALS, AWAKE, WITH ANGELS JOIN.

[ALTHOUGH this carol is included in most of the broadside sheets of the present day, still it is doubtful if it was composed later than the time of Watt or Wesley.]

MORTALS, awake, with angels join,
And chant the solemn lay;
Joy, love, and gratitude combine
To hail th' auspicious day.

In heaven the rapturous song began,
And sweet seraphic fire
Through all the shining legions ran,
And strung and tun'd the lyre.

Swift through the vast expanse it flew,
And loud the echo roll'd;
The theme, the song, the joy was new,
'Twas more than heaven could hold.

Down through the portals of the sky
Th' impetuous torrent ran;
And angels flew with eager joy
To bear the news to man.

[Wrapt in the silence of the night
Lay all the Eastern world,
When bursting, glorious, heavenly light
The wondrous scene unfurl'd.]

Hark! the cherubic armies shout,
And glory leads the song;
Good-will and peace are heard throughout
Th' harmonious heavenly throng.

Oh for a glance of heavenly love
Our hearts and songs to raise,
Sweetly to bear our souls above,
And mingle with their lays!

With joy the chorus we'll repeat,
"Glory to God on high!
Good-will and peace are now complete;
Jesus was born to die."

Hail, Prince of Life! forever hail!
Redeemer, brother, friend!
Though earth, and time, and life should fail
Thy praise shall never end.

A NEW CHRISTMAS CAROL.

[SUCH is the title of a pleasing little hymn which occurs on a sheet printed at the beginning of the present century. It does not appear to have been gathered into any previous collection.]

IT is the day, the Holy day,
On which our Lord was born,
And sweetly doth the sunbeams gild
The dew-besprinkled thorn.
The birds sing through the heavens,
And the breezes gently play,
And song and sunshine lovely
Begins this Holy day.

'Twas in a humble manger,
A little lowly shed,
With cattle at his infant feet,
And shepherds at his head,
The Saviour of this sinful world
In innocence first lay,
While Wise Men made their offerings
To him this Holy day.

He comes to save the perishing,
To waft the sighs to heaven
Of guilty men, who truly sought
To weep, to be forgiven.
And intercessor still he shines,
And men to him should pray
At his altar's feet for meekness
Upon this Holy day.

As flowers still bloom fair again,
Though all their life seems shed,
Thus we shall rise with life once more,
Though number'd with the dead.
Then may our stations be near Him,
To whom we worship pay,
And praise with heartfelt gratitude,
Upon this Holy day.

CHRIST WAS BORN ON CHRISTMAS DAY.

[THIS is another of the macaronic carols, and will be found to be one of the most jubilant and spirited in our collection. It is believed to be of Swedish origin, possessing the true choral resonance of the Scandinavian ballad. We are indebted to the Rev. J. M. Neale for this English version.]

CHRIST was born on Christmas day;
Wreath the holly, twine the bay;
Christus natus hodie:
The Babe, the Son, the Holy One of Mary.

He is born to set us free,
He is born our Lord to be,
Ex Mariâ Virgine:
The God, the Lord, by all adored forever.

Let the bright red berries glow
Everywhere in goodly show;
Christus natus hodie:
The Babe, the Son, the Holy One of Mary.

Christian men, rejoice and sing;
'Tis the birthday of a King,
Ex Mariâ Virgine:
The God, the Lord, by all adored forever.

Night of sadness;
Morn of gladness evermore: ever, ever,
After many troubles sore,
Morn of gladness, evermore, and evermore.

Midnight scarcely pass'd and over,
Drawing to this holy morn,
Very early, very early
Christ was born.

Sing out with bliss,
His name is this; Emmanuel:
As 'twas foretold, in days of old,
By Gabriel.

Midnight scarcely pass'd and over,
Drawing to this holy morn:
Very early, very early
Christ was born.

CAROL FOR ST. STEPHEN'S DAY.

[THIS carol is of the beginning of the fifteenth century. The legend itself dates back to a much more remote period. The story of the cock was originally applied to other saints, as St. James, St. Peter, or the Virgin. The oldest account, about 1200, is this: Two friends sat down to dinner in Bologna, and one bade the other carve the cock, which he did, so that, as he said, not St. Peter or our Lord himself could put it together again. The cock sprang up, clapped his wings and crowed, scattering the sauce over the two friends, and rendering them lepers till the day of their death. The same miracle is related as having occurred to prove the innocence of persons falsely accused, and is found in the legends of Spain, Brittany, Italy, and Sclavonian countries. How it came to be appropriated to St. Stephen does not appear. The boar's head, which he brings in, was the established Yule-tide dish of the North in old heathen times, as well as afterward.

I am indebted for the above facts to Dr. Prior's delightful volumes of "Danish Ballads," recently published. That gentleman has given the very curious Danish version of the legend.

In the carol entitled the "Carnal and the Crane," further on, this same legend appears in a more modern dress.

Very nearly the original words of this old carol are given, as a specimen of the language of the period.]

SAINT Stephen was a clerk
In king Herodes hall,
And served him of bread and cloth
As ever king befalle.[1]

[1] *Befalle*, i.e. happened; as well as ever happened to a king.

Stephen out of kitchen came
With boar's head in hande,
He saw a star was fair and bright,
Over Bethlem stonde.

He cast adown the boar's head,
And went into the halle;
"I forsake thee, king Herod,
And thy werkes alle.

"I forsake thee, king Herod,
And thine werkes alle,
There is a child in Bethlem borne,
Is better than we alle."

"What aileth thee, Stephen,
What is thee befalle?
Lacketh thee either meat or drink,
In king Herod's hall?"

"Lacketh me neither meat nor drink
In king Herod's hall,
There is a child in Bethlem born,
Is better than we all."

"What aileth thee, Stephen,
Art thou wode,[1] or thou ginnest to brede?[2]
Lacketh thee either gold or fee,
Or any rich weede?"[3]

"Lacketh me neither gold nor fee,
Nor none rich weede,
There is a child in Bethlem born
Shall help us at our need."

"That is all so sooth, Stephen,
All so sooth, I wiss,
As this capon crow shall,
That lyeth here in my dish.

That word was not so soon said,
That word in that hall,
The capon crew, *Christus natus est*,
Among the lordes all.

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[1] *Wode*, i.e. mad.
[2] *Brede*, i.e. upbraid. Danish, *bebreide*. In Chaucer the line,—
"For veray wo out of his wit he braide,"
is explained, "he went or ran out of his wits."
[3] *Weede*, i.e. dress.

Riseth up my tormentors,
By two, and all by one,
And leadeth Stephen out of town,
And stoneth him with stone.

Token they Stephen,
And stoned him in the way,
And therefore is his even,
On Christes owen day.

THE VIRGIN AND CHILD.

[THE present carol has been copied from a reprint of the ancient manuscript in the possession of Thomas Wright, Esq. Another version of it will be found in the "Reliquiæ Antiquæ," printed from a MS. in the Advocates' Library, Edinburgh. It may be remarked that there is a gracefulness and tenderness in many of the touches, not often met with in poems of this early date.]

THIS winter's night
I saw a sight,
A star as bright as day,
And ever among
A maiden sung,
Lullay, by by, lullay.

This lovely lady sat and sang, and to her child she said:

"My son, my brother, my father dear, why lyest thou thus in hayd—
My sweet bird,
Though it betide

Thou be not king veray;[1]
But, nevertheless,
I will not cease
To sing, by by, lullay."

The Child then spake; in his talking, he to his mother said:
"It happeneth, mother, I am King, in crib though I be laid;
For angels bright
Did down alight,
Thou knowest it is no nay,
And of that sight
Thou mayst be light[2]
To sing, by by, lullay."

"Now, sweet son, since thou art King, why art thou laid in stall?
Why not thou ordain thy bedding in some great king's hall?
Me thinketh 'tis right
That king or knight

[1] In truth. [2] Quick.

Should be in good array
And then among
It were no wrong
To sing, by by, lullay."

"Mary, mother, I am thy child, though I be
laid in stall,
Lords and dukes shall worship me, and so shall
kings all;
Yet shall we see
That kings three
Shall come on the twelfth day;
For this behest
Give me thy breast
And sing, by by, lullay."

"Now tell me, sweet son, I thee pray, thou art
my love and dear,
How should I keep thee to thy pay,[1] and make
thee glad of cheer;
For all thy will
I would fulfil

[1] Satisfaction.

Thou knowest full well in fay,[1]
And for all this
I will thee kiss
And sing, by by, lullay."

"My dear mother, when time it be, take thou me up aloft,
And set me upon thy knee, and handle me full soft;
And in thy arm
Thou wilt me warm,
And keep me night and day;
If I should weep
And may not sleep,
Thou sing, by by, lullay."

"Now, sweet son, since it is so, all things are at thy will,
I pray thee grant to me a boon, if it be right and skill,[2]
That child or man,
That will or can

[1] In truth. [2] Reasonable.

Be merry upon my day;
To bliss them bring,
And I shall sing
Lullay, by by, lullay."

THE THREE KINGS.

[THREE versions of this carol are known to exist. Two of them have been reprinted by Thomas Wright, Esq., in his collection of carols, edited for the Percy Society. The following has been perfected from these. The carol was written in the reign of Henry VII. With regard to the refrain, such choral endings are common in compositions of the period. Several of the Robin Hood ballads exhibit similar peculiarities of rhyming.]

NOW is the time of Christmas come,
Together joined are Father and Son,
And with the Holy Ghost are one,
In fere-a
God send us a new year-a.

I would now sing, if that I might,
Of a Child, so fair to sight,
A maiden bear this winter's night,
So still-a;
And as it was his will-a.

There came three kings from Galilee,
To Bethlehem, that fair citie,
To see Him that should ever be
By right-a;
Lord, and king, and knight-a.

As they went forth with their offering,
They met Herod, that moody king,
He asked them of their coming
That way-a;
And thus to them 'gan say-a:

"From whence come ye, you kings three?"
"Out of the East, as you may see,
To seek him that should ever be
By right-a;
Lord, and king, and knight-a."

"When you to this child have been,
Come you home this way again,
And tell me all that ye have seen,
I pray-a;
Go not another way-a."

Then of Herod, that moody king,
They took their leave both old and young,
And forth they went with their offering,
By light-a
Of the star that shone so bright-a.

Till they came to that blissfull place
Where Jesus and his mother was,
There they offered with great solace
In fere-a;
Gold, incense and myrrh-a.

When they had their offering made,
As the Holy Ghost them bade,
Then were they both merry and glad
And light-a;
It was a good fair sight-a.

Anon, as on their way they went,
The Father of heaven an angel sent,
To those three kings that made present,
That day-a,
Who thus to them did say-a:

"My Lord doth warn you every one,
By king Herod ye go not home,
For if you do, you will be slain
Full soon-a;
And woe to you to be done-a."

So forth they went another way,
Through the might of God, his lay
As the angel to them did say,
Full right-a
It was a good fair sight-a.

When they were come to their countree,
Merry and glad they were all three,
Of the sight that they did see
By night-a;
By the stars shining light-a.

Kneel we now all here adown
To that Lord of great renown,
And pray we in good devotion
For grace-a,
In Heaven we have a place-a.

THE GOLDEN CAROL OF MELCHIOR, BALTHAZAR, AND GASPAR,

THE THREE KINGS OF COLOGNE.

[LEGENDARY lore has provided for us three notable personages, Gasper, Melchior, and Balthasar, commonly known as the Magi, who, guided by the star, were present at or shortly after the Nativity; and who survive in history as "The Three Kings of Cologne." These were the wise men who, under the direction of the star, travelled to Bethlehem with their gifts of gold, myrrh, and frankincense—whence the practice of bestowing gifts at the season of the Nativity. Sir Thomas Browne, in his curious work on vulgar errors, was the first amongst us to resolve the mystery of the three Kings of Cologne. "These wise men or kings," says he, "were probably of Arabia, and descended of Abraham by Keturah, who apprehending the mystery of the star, were by the same conducted into Judea, returned into their own country, and were after baptized by Thomas; thence about three hundred years after, by Helena the Empress, their bodies were translated to Constantinople, thence by Eustatius into Milan, and at last, by Renatus the Bishop, into Cologne (1170), where they are believed at present to remain, their monuments shown unto strangers, and having lost their Arabian titles, are crowned Kings of Cologne." The legend forms the burden of many carols, but the common English version follows that now given.]

WE saw a light shine out afar,
On Christmas in the morning,
And straight we knew Christ's Star it was,
Bright beaming in the morning.

Then did we fall on bended knee,
On Christmas in the morning,
And prais'd the Lord, who'd let us see
His glory at its dawning.

Oh! ever thought be of His Name,
On Christmas in the morning,
Who bore for us both grief and shame,
Afflictions sharpest scorning.
And may we die (when death shall come)
On Christmas in the morning,
And see in heav'n, our glorious home,
That Star of Christmas morning.

FOR CHRISTMAS DAY IN THE MORNING.

[THIS is the popular English version of the "Golden Carol," just given, and details the wanderings of the Magi, or Three Kings. In the original, *Noel*, the French word for Christmas, or Christmas-carol, is corrupted to "Nowell." I have not hesitated to restore the correct rendering. With regard to the three poor Shepherds, alluded to in the second line, Mr. Sandys remarks, that according to some legends the number was four, called Misael, Achael, Cyriacus, and Stephanus, and these, with the names of the Three Kings, were used as a charm to cure the biting of serpents, and other venomous reptiles and beasts. In the seventh of the Chester Mysteries, the Shepherds, who are there but three, have the more homely names of Harvey, Tudd, and Trowle, and are Cheshire or Lancashire boors by birth and habits. Trowle's gift to our Saviour is "a pair of his wife's old hose."]

THE first Noel the Angel did say,
Was to three poor Shepherds in the fields as they lay ;
In the fields where they lay keeping their sheep
In a cold winter's night that was so deep.
Noel, Noel, Noel, Noel,
Born is the King of Israel.

They looked up and saw a Star
Shining in the East beyond them far,
And to the earth it gave great light,
And so continued both day and night.
Noel, etc.

And by the light of that same Star,
Three Wise Men came from land afar;
To seek for a King was their intent,
And to follow the Star wherever it went.
Noel, etc.

This Star drew nigh to the North West,
O'er Bethlehem it took its rest,
And there it did both stop and stay
Right over the place where Jesus lay.
Noel, etc.

Then did they know assuredly
Within that house the King did lie:
One entered in there for to see,
But found the Babe in poverty.
Noel, etc.

Then enter'd all the Wise Men three
Most reverently upon their knee,
And offer'd there in his prescence,
Both gold, and myrrh, and frankincense.
Noel, etc.

Now let us all with one accord
Sing praises to our heavenly Lord,
That did make heaven and earth of nought,
But with his blood mankind hath bought.
Noel, etc.[1]

[1] In some old broadside copies two additional, but very foolish verses are occasionally found. They were probably inserted by the local printer when passing his sheet off for "A New Carol."

I SAW THREE SHIPS.

[THIS carol is sometimes known as *Christmas Day in the Morning*. Hone gives it this title in his list. It has always been a great favorite with the illiterate, and from its quaintness will be found not displeasing to the more refined. Ritson, in his "Introduction to Scotch Songs," vol. 1, gives the following lines as sung during the Christmas holidays about the middle of the sixteenth century, which bear a similarity to this carol:

"All sones of Adam, rise up with me,
Go praise the blessed Trinitie, etc.
Then spake the Archangel Gabriel, said, Ave, Mary mild,
The Lord of Lords is with thee, now shall you go with child.

Ecce ancilla domini.

Then said the Virgin, as thou hast said, so mat it be,
Welcome be heaven's King.
There comes a ship far sailing then,
Saint Michel was the stieres-man;
Saint John sate in the horn:
Our Lord harped, our Lady sang,
And all the bells of heaven they rang,
On Christ's sonday at morn, etc."

There is another version of this carol common amongst the people which begins:

"As I sat on a sunny bank,
A sunny bank, a sunny bank.
As I sat on a sunny bank,
On Christmas Day in the morning;"

and finishes with this singular verse—Joseph and his "fair lady" being in the ships:

"O! he did whistle, and she did sing,
And all the bells on earth did ring,
For joy that our Saviour he was born,
On Christmas Day in the morning."]

I SAW three ships come sailing in,
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day:
I saw three ships come sailing in
On Christmas Day in the morning.

And who was in those ships all three,
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day?
And who was in those ships all three,
On Christmas Day in the morning?

Our Saviour Christ and his ladye,
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day;
Our Saviour Christ and his ladye
On Christmas Day in the morning.

Pray whither sailed those ships all three,
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day?
Pray whither sailed those ships all three
On Christmas Day in the morning?

Oh they sailed into Bethlehem,
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day;
Oh they sailed into Bethlehem,
On Christmas Day in the morning.

And all the bells on Earth shall ring,
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day;
And all the bells on Earth shall ring,
On Christmas Day in the morning.

And all the angels in Heaven shall sing,
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day;
And all the angels in Heaven shall sing,
On Christmas Day in the morning.

And all the souls on Earth shall sing,
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day;
And all the souls on Earth shall sing,
On Christmas Day in the morning.

Then let us all rejoice amain,
On Christmas Day, on Christmas Day;
Then let us all rejoice amain,
On Christmas Day in the morning.

THE CARNAL AND THE CRANE.

[THE same legend that is given in this carol is to be observed in the more ancient one to St. Stephen. Ritson has inserted the latter in his "Ancient Ballads" from an old MS. of the reign of Henry VI.

The *Carnal* is a bird; the word corrupted by the printer into *reign* is the obsolete word *rein*, formerly used in the sense of *run*. The composition has other marks of age independent of the legend. Hone terms it a Warwickshire carol.]

AS I passed by a river side,
And there as I did reign,
In argument I chanced to hear
A Carnal and a Crane.

The Carnal said unto the Crane,
"If all the world should turn,
Before we had the Father
But now we have the Son!

"From whence does the Son come?
From where and from what place?"
He said, "In a manger
Between an ox and an ass!"

"I pray thee," said the Carnal,
"Tell me before thou go,
Was not the Mother of Jesus
Conceived by the Holy Ghost?"

"She was a blessed Virgin,
And pure from all sin;
She was the handmaid of our Lord,
And Mother of our King."

"Where is the golden cradle
That Christ was rocked in?
Where are the silken sheets
That Jesus was wrapt in?"

"A manger was the cradle
That Christ was rocked in;
The provender the asses left,
So sweetly he slept on.

"There was a Star in the West land,
So bright did it appear
Into King Herod's chamber,
And where King Herod were.

"The Wise Men soon espied it
And told the King on high,
A princely babe was born that night
No king could e'er destroy.

"'If this be true,' King Herod said,
'As thou tellest me,
This roasted cock that lies in the dish
Shall crow full fences[1] three.'

"The cock soon freshly feathered was,
By the work of God's own hand,
And then three fences crowed he,
In the dish where he did stand.

"'Rise up, rise up, you merry men all,
See that you ready be,
All children under two years old
Now slain they all shall be.'

"Then Jesus, ah! and Joseph,
And Mary, that was so pure,
They travelled into Egypt,
As you shall find it sure.

[1] Shouts.

"And when they came to Egypt's land,
Among those fierce wild beasts,
Mary, she being weary,
Must needs sit down to rest.

"'Come sit thee down,' says Jesus,
'Come sit thee down by me,
And thou shalt see how these wild beasts
Do come and worship me.'

"First, came the lovely lion,
Which Jesus' grace did spring,
And of the wild beasts in the field,
The lion shall be the king.

"We'll choose our virtuous princes,
Of birth and high degree,
In every sundry nation,
Where'er we come and see.

"Then Jesus, ah! and Joseph,
And Mary, that was unknown,
They travelled by a husbandman
Just while his seed was sown

"'God speed thee, man!' said Jesus,
'Go fetch thy ox and wain,
And carry home thy corn again
Which thou this day hath sown.'

"The husbandman fell on his knees,
Even before his face;
'Long time hast thou been looked for,
But now thou art come at last;

"'And I myself do now believe,
Thy name is Jesus called;
Redeemer of mankind thou art,
Though undeserving all.'

"'The truth, man, thou hast spoken,
Of it thou may'st be sure,
For I must lose my precious blood
For thee and thousands more.

"'If any one should come this way,
And enquire for me alone,
Tell them that Jesus passed by,
When thy seed was sown.'

"After that there came King Herod,
With his train so furiously,
Enquiring of the husbandman,
Whether Jesus passed by.

"'Why the truth it must be spoke,
And the truth it must be known,
For Jesus passed this way,
When my seed was sown.

"'But now I have it reapen,
And some laid on my wain,
Ready to fetch and carry
Into my barn again.'

"'Turn back,' says the Captain,
'Your labor and mine's in vain,
It's full three-quarters of a year
Since he his seed has sown.'

"So Herod was deceived
By the work of God's own hand,
And further he proceeded
Into the Holy Land.

"There's thousands of children young,
Which for his sake did die,
Do not forbid these little ones,
And do not them deny.

"The truth now I have spoken,
And the truth now I have shown;
How the blessed Virgin,
She brought us forth a Son."

THE ANGEL GABRIEL FROM GOD.

[THE birth of our Saviour was a mystery upon which the old divines and carolists were ever fond of dwelling. The familiar expressions used toward the Virgin, the angel Gabriel, and the other distinguished personages of the event, served to enlist the sympathies of rustics, and rendered the outlines of the narrative easier to their understanding. In most of the carols of this kind the plainness of the language employed prevents their being reprinted in any other than in a purely antiquarian work. The following carol, however, although exhibiting the most indifferent poetry, shadows forth the spirit of its class, and is more free from the objections alluded to than any other I have fallen in with.]

THE Angel Gabriel from God
Was sent to Galilee,
Unto a Virgin fair and free,
Whose name was called Mary.
And when the Angel thither came,
He fell down on his knee,
And looking up in the Virgin's face,
He said "All hail, Mary."

Then, sing we all, both great and small,
Noel, Noel, Noel;
We may rejoice to hear the voice
Of the Angel Gabriel.

Mary anon looked him upon,
And said "Sir, what are ye?
I marvel much at these tidings
Which thou hast brought to me.
Married I am unto an old man,
As the lot fell unto me;
Therefore I pray depart away,
For I stand in doubt of thee."
Then sing, etc.

"Mary," he said, "be not afraid,
But do believe in me:
The power of the Holy Ghost
Shall overshadow thee;
Thou shalt conceive without any grief,
As the Lord told unto me;
God's own dear Son from Heaven shall com ,
And shall be born of thee."
Then sing, etc.

This came to pass as God's will was,
Even as the Angel told.
About midnight an Angel bright
Came to the Shepherds' fold,

And told them both where and when
Born was the child, our Lord,
And all along this was their song,
"All glory be given to God."
Then sing, etc

Good people all, both great and small,
The which do hear my voice,
With one accord let's praise the Lord,
And in our hearts rejoice;
Like sister and brother, let's love one another
Whilst we our lives do spend
Whilst we have space let's pray for grace,
And so let my Carol end.
Then sing, etc.

THE HOLY WELL.

[THIS popular carol preserves in quaint and simple verse the outlines of an old legend of the dark ages. The people were anxious to learn more about the first year of the life of Jesus than the Scriptures supplied, and the priests and monks invented various pleasing stories to amuse and instruct them. The Apocryphal Books of the New Testament, also, afforded a great many religious tales. Some of these were put into verse. A specimen may be seen in the following. On the broad-sheet (printed at Gravesend in the last century), it is stated to be "A very Ancient Carol."]

AS it fell out one May morning,[1]
And on a bright holiday,
Sweet Jesus asked of his dear mother
If he might go to play.

"To play, to play, sweet Jesus shall go,
And to play now get you gone,
And let me hear of no complaint
At night when you come home."

[1] I might mention, as an indication of the probable date of this simple composition, that several ballads of the reign of Henry VIII. and Elizabeth began in this style:

"As it fell out on a holiday,
As it fell out on a Whitsunday," etc.

The whole piece has a strong ballad flavor.

Sweet Jesus went down to yonder town,
As far as the Holy Well,
And there did see as fine children
As any tongue can tell.

He said, "God bless you every one,
May Christ your portion be;
Little children, shall I play with you?
And you shall play with me."

But they made answer to him, "No,"
They were lords' and ladies' sons;
And he, the meanest of them all,
Was born in an ox's stall.

Sweet Jesus turned him around,
And he neither laugh'd nor smil'd,
But the tears came trickling from his eyes
Like water from the skies.

Sweet Jesus turned him about,
To his mother's dear home went he,
And said, "I have been in yonder town,
As after you may see.

L. of C.

"I have been in yonder town,
As far as the Holy Well;
There did I meet as fine children
As any tongue can tell.

"I bid God bless them every one,
And Christ their bodies see;
Little children, shall I play with you?
And you shall play with me.

"But then they answered me, 'No,'
They were lords' and ladies' sons;
And I, the meanest of them all,
Was born in an ox's stall."

"Though you are but a maiden's child,
Born in an ox's stall,
Thou art the Christ, the King of heaven,
And the Saviour of them all.

"Sweet Jesus, go down to yonder town,
As far as the Holy Well,
And take away those sinful souls,
And dip them deep in hell."

"Nay, nay," sweet Jesus mildly said,
"Nay, nay, that must not be,
For there are too many sinful souls
Crying out for help of me."

ALL YOU THAT ARE TO MIRTH INCLINED.

[THIS rude old carol is still an especial favorite with the peasantry. Hone mentions it in his list, and I find that nearly all the broadside printers include it in their yearly sheets. The word "mirth" was certainly not used by the author in that irreverent sense which it now usually conveys. Religious joy was intended, not boisterous merriment. In an old edition of Deloney's "Garland of Good-will," this carol is given under the title of "The Sinner's Redemption."]

ALL you that are to mirth inclined,
Consider well and bear in mind
What our good God for us hath done
In sending his beloved Son.
And to redeem our souls from thrall,
He is the Saviour of us all.

Let all your songs and praises be
Unto his Heavenly Majesty,
And evermore among your mirth
Remember Christ our Saviour's birth.
And to redeem, etc.

The five-and-twentieth of December
Good cause have you for to remember,
In Bethlehem upon this morn
There was our blessed Saviour born.
And to redeem, etc.

The night before that happy tide
The spotless Virgin, and her guide,
Went long time seeking up and down,
To find them lodging in the town.
And to redeem, etc.

And mark how all things came to pass,
The inns and lodgings so filled was,
That they could have no room at all,
But in a silly[1] ox's stall.
And to redeem, etc.

That night the Virgin Mary mild
Was safe delivered of a Child,
According unto Heaven's decree
Man's sweet salvation for to be.
And to redeem, etc.

[1] Old word for *simple* or *inoffensive.*

Near Bethlehem did Shepherds keep
Their herds and flocks, and feeding sheep,
To whom God's Angels did appear,
Which put the Shepherds in great fear.
And to redeem, etc.

"Prepare and go," the Angel said,
"To Bethlehem, be not afraid;
There shall you see this blessed morn,
The princely babe, sweet Jesus, born."
And to redeem, etc.

With thankful hearts and joyful mind,
The Shepherds went this babe to find,
And as the heavenly Angel told,
They did our Saviour Christ behold.
And to redeem, etc.

Within a manger was he laid,
The Virgin Mary by him stayed,
Attending on the Lord of life,
Being both mother, maid, and wife.
And to redeem, etc.

Three Eastern Wise Men from afar,
Directed by a glorious Star,
Came boldly on and made no stay
Until they came where Jesus lay.
And to redeem, etc.

And being come unto the place
Wherein the blest Messias was,
They humbly laid before his feet
Their gifts of gold and odours sweet.
And to redeem, etc.

See how the Lord of Heaven and Earth
Shew'd himself lowly in his birth,
A sweet example for mankind,
To learn to bear an humble mind.
And to redeem, etc.

No costly robes or rich attire
Did Jesus Christ our Lord desire.
No musick nor sweet harmony,
Till glorious Angels came from high.
And to redeem, etc.

If choirs of Angels did rejoice,
Well may mankind with heart and voice
Sing praises to the God of Heaven,
That unto us his Son is given.
And to redeem, etc.

GLORIA TIBI DOMINE.

[SINGING short stories of the birth of our Saviour as Carol-lullabys to infants appears to have been common in early times. In those ages no occasion seems to have been lost sight of for narrating impressive portions of the story of Christ. Rhyming narratives of the wicked Herod, and the poor little infants, were also general in the nurseries. Portions of these lullabys tacked to hymns, or carols altered to suit the infant comprehension, are now occasionally met with.

Latin choruses to Godly songs or carols in the vernacular arose from the use of Latin prayers and chants in the churches in those days. Education, prior to the Reformation, being for the most part conducted at or under supervision of the monasteries, Monkish Latin was tolerably familiar to the people.]

THERE is a Child born of our blessed Virgin;
I heard a Maid lullaby to sing:
"Peace, my dear Child, of thy weeping,
For thou shalt be our Heavenly King."
Now sing we, and now sing we,
To the Gloria tibi, Domine.

"O Mother! O Mother! your wishes are naught;
It is not for me such carols are wrought;
Such carols were never by woman thought
To the Gloria tibi, Domine."
Now sing we, etc.

"O my dear Son, why sayest thou so?
Thou art my Son, I have no moe;
When Gabriel bespoke thee full of grace,
Thou needest not to tell me of this case."
Now sing we, etc.

"Oh, they will thrust, Mother, my head from my hair,
With a crown of sharp thorns they me will not spare,
And with sharp spears my heart will tear,
To the Gloria tibi, Domine.
Now sing we, etc.

"Oh, come you here, Mother, and you shall see
My hands and feet nailed to the rood tree,
And my feet, Mother, are fastened thereby,
A vile sight, Mother, for you to see."

Now sing we, and now sing we,
To the Gloria tibi, Domine,
And now sing we more or less,
And welcome be this merry Christmas.

THE CHERRY-TREE CAROL.

[MARY'S desire for the fruit on the cherry-tree, and Joseph's refusal to gather it for her on the return of his jealousy, a singular legend of the dark ages, forms the subject of a Christmas carol still sung in many parts of the country. The remarkable scene occurs in the fifteenth pageant of the "Coventry Mysteries." *Mary* says (I give the original phraseology):

Amy swete husbond, wolde ye telle to me
What tre is yon standynge upon yon hylle?
Joseph. Forsothe, Mary, it is clepyd a chery tre,
In time of yer ye myght fede you y on yo fylle.

Maria. Turne ageyn husbond and beholde yon tre,
How yt blomyght now so swetely.
Joseph. Cum on, Mary yt we worn at yon cyte,
Or ellys we may be blamyd I tell yow lythly.

Maria. Now my spouse, I pray you to be hold
How ye cheryes growyn upon yon tre,
For to have y of ryght fayn I wold,
& it plesyd yow to labor so mech for me.

Joseph. Yor desyr to fulfylle I shall assay sekyrly,
Ow to plucke you of these cheries it is a werk wylde,
For ye tre is so hyg it wold not be lyghtly,
Y for lete hy pluk yon cheryes be gatt you wt childe.

Maria. Now good Lord I pray the, graunt me yis boun,
To have of yese cheries, and it be yor wylle,
Now I thank it God, yis tre bowyth to me down,
I may now gadery anowe & eten my fylle.

Joseph. Ow, I know weyl I have offended my God i trinyte,
Spekeyng to my spowse these unkynde wurdys,
For now I believe wel it may now other be
But yt my spowse beryght ye kyngs son of blys, etc.

A writer on carols has remarked· "The admiration of my earliest days for some lines in the 'Cherry Carol' still remains, nor can I help thinking that the reader will see somewhat of cause for it." Different versions, with additions and omissions, are given in the modern broadsides. The version here printed has been made after a careful examination of several copies printed in various parts of England. A few verses it was thought advisable to omit, but the sequence of the narrative is supplied by prose explanations.]

JOSEPH was an old man,
And an old man was he,
When he married Mary
The Queen of Galilee.

Joseph and Mary walked
Through a garden gay,
Where the cherries they grew
Upon every tree.

Joseph and Mary walked
Through an orchard good,
Where were cherries and berries
As red as any blood.[1]

[1] Other copies of this carol supply different versions of these verses. One printed at Birmingham reads:

"Joseph and Mary walked
In the garden gay,
Where exercises grew
Upon every spray," etc.

Joseph upon learning that the union with his "cousin Mary" is about to be blessed by a babe, suddenly becomes jealous and unkind. The carol continues:

O then bespoke Mary,
With words both meek and mild,
"Gather me some cherries, Joseph,
They run so in my mind."

The next verse gives Joseph's uncouth answer, that if she wants cherries she must ask somebody else to gather them for her, as he is not inclined to do so. The spirit of the unborn Jesus, however, hears the rebuke, and he commands his mother:

"Go to the tree, Mary,
And it shall bow to thee,
And the highest branch of all
Shall bow down to Mary's knee.

"Go to the tree, Mary,
And it shall bow to thee,
And you shall gather cherries,
By one, by two, and three."

Then bowed down the highest tree
Unto his Mother's hand:

"See," Mary cried, "see, Joseph,
I have cherries at command!" [1]

Joseph relents at the harsh words he has spoken, and replies:

"O eat your cherries, Mary,
O eat your cherries now,
O eat your cherries, Mary,
That grow upon the bough." [2]

Time is supposed to have elapsed, and the scene has changed.

As Joseph was a-walking
He heard an angel sing:
"This night shall be born
Our Heavenly King;

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[1] Another version represents the fruit as previously ordained for Mary:

"'Now you may see, Joseph,
Those cherries were for me.'"

[2] The version given by Mr. Sandys reads:

"O then bespake Joseph,
'I have done Mary wrong,
But cheer up, my dearest,
And be not cast down.'"

Mr. Sandys obtained the carol from the West country, where everybody, even strangers, are addressed as "my dear."

"He neither shall be born
In housen, nor in hall,
Nor in the place of Paradise,
But in an ox's stall;

"He neither shall be clothed,
In purple nor in pall
But all in fair linen,
As were babies all:

"He neither shall be rocked
In silver nor in gold,
But in a wooden cradle,
That rocks on the mould;

"He neither shall be christened
In white wine nor red,
But with fair spring water
With which we were christened."

More time has elapsed, and the scene again changes.

Then Mary took her young Son,
And set him on her knee:
"I pray thee now, dear child,
Tell how this world shall be?"

"O, I shall be as dead, Mother,
As the stones in the wall;
O, the stones in the street, Mother,
Shall mourn for me all.[1]

"And upon a Wednesday
My vow I will make,
And upon Good Friday
My death I will take;

"Upon Easter-day, Mother,
My uprising shall be;
Oh, the sun and the moon, Mother,
Shall both rise with me."

---

[1] The Warwickshire broadside copy in my possession gives this stanza:

"This world shall be like
The stones in the street,
For the sun and the moon
Shall bow down at my feet."

DIVES AND LAZARUS.

[THIS carol, I believe, has not been given in any previous collection. It is reprinted here from an old Birmingham broadside. Hone appears to have met with it, and alludes to a quaint rendering of the thirteenth verse which occurred in his copy. The lines are:

"Rise up, rise up, brother Dives,
And come along with me,
For you've a place provided in hell
To sit upon a serpent's knee."

The idea of sitting on the serpent's knee was, perhaps conveyed to the poet's mind by old woodcut representations of Lazarus seated in Abraham's lap. More anciently, Abraham was frequently drawn holding him up by the sides that he might be the better seen by Dives in the fiery pit.]

AS it fell out upon a day,
Rich Dives he made a feast,
And he invited all his friends,
And gentry of the best.

Then Lazarus laid him down and down,
And down at Dives's door,
"Some meat, some drink, brother Dives,
Bestow upon the poor."

"Thou art none of my brother, Lazarus,
That lies begging at my door,
No meat nor drink will I give thee,
Nor bestow upon the poor."

Then Lazarus laid him down and down,
And down at Dives's wall,
"Some meat, some drink, brother Dives,
Or with hunger starve I shall."

"Thou art none of my brother, Lazarus,
That lies begging at my wall,
No meat nor drink will I give thee,
But with hunger starve you shall."

Then Lazarus laid him down and down,
And down at Dives's gate,
"Some meat, some drink, brother Dives,
For Jesus Christ his sake."

"Thou art none of my brother, Lazarus,
That lies begging at my gate,
No meat nor drink will I give thee,
For Jesus Christ his sake."

Then Dives sent out his merry men,
To whip poor Lazarus away,
They had no power to strike a stroke,
But flung their whips away.

Then Dives sent out his hungry dogs,
To bite him as he lay,
They had no power to bite at all,
But licked his sores away.

As it fell out upon a day,
Poor Lazarus sickened and died,
There came two angels out of heaven,
His soul therein to guide.

"Rise up, rise up, brother Lazarus,
And go along with me,
For you've a place prepared in heaven,
To sit on an angel's knee."

As it fell out upon a day,
Rich Dives sickened and died,
There came two serpents out of hell,
His soul therein to guide.

"Rise up, rise up, brother Dives,
And go with us to see,
A dismal place prepared in hell,
From which thou canst not flee."

Then Dives looked up with his eyes,
And saw poor Lazarus blest,
"Give me one drop of water, brother Lazarus,
To quench my flaming thirst.

"Oh! had I as many years to abide,
As there are blades of grass,
Then there would be an end, but now
Hell's pains will ne'er be past.

"Oh! was I now but alive again,
The space of one half hour,
Oh! that I had my peace secure,
Then the devil should have no power."

THE MOON SHINES BRIGHT.

[As in the case of some of the preceding, there are, doubtless, expressions in this simple effusion at which it is difficult to abstain from smiling. The perfect earnestness of these carols, however, and the charm they have long held over the people, are sufficient apologies for inserting them here. Often they are the sole vehicles of ancient religious stories that have come down to us in this form when they have perished in the more dignified chronicles. On a broadside copy printed about 1750, I observe that it is entitled "A New Christmas Carol"; but I scarcely think it was composed later than the early part of the preceding century.]

THE moon shines bright, and the stars give a light,
A little before it was day,
Our Lord, our God, he called on us,
And bid us awake and pray.

Awake, awake, good people all,
Awake and you shall hear,
Our Lord, our God, he died on the cross,
For us whom he loved so dear.

O fair, O fair Jerusalem,
When shall I come to thee?
When shall my sorrows have an end,
Thy joy that I may see?

The fields were green as green could be,
When from his glorious seat
Our Lord, our God, he watered us,
With his heavenly dew so sweet.

And for the saving of our souls
Christ died upon the cross;
We ne'er shall do for Jesus Christ
As he has done for us.

The life of man is but a span,
And cut down in its flower,
We are here to-day and to-morrow are gone,
We are all dead in an hour.

O pray teach your children, man,
The while that you are here;
It will be better for your souls
When your corpse lies on the bier.

With one turf at your head, O man,
And another at your feet,
Thy good deeds and thy bad, O man,
Will altogether meet.

My song is done, I must begone,
I can stay no longer here,
God bless you all both great and small,
And send you a joyful new year!

GOD REST YOU MERRY GENTLEMEN.

[THIS is perhaps the greatest favorite of all the carols now sung at Christmas. The melody is homely and plaintive, and appears to touch that chord in the popular mind which more elaborate compositions appeal to in vain. An antiquary many years ago thus spoke of it: "The melody of 'God rest you Merry Gentlemen' delighted my childhood, and I still listen with pleasure (as who does not) to the shivering carolist's evening chant toward the clear kitchen window deck'd with holly, the flaring fire showing the whitened hearth and reflecting gleams of light from the surfaces of the dresser utensils."

An old broadside copy of this, with three other "choice carols for Christmas holidays," occurs in the Roxburghe Collection in the British Museum. Mr. Chappell, in his valuable work on "Popular Music," presents us with two versions of the tune, and adds, "I have received many others from different sources, for no carol seems to be more generally known."]

GOD rest you merry gentlemen,
Let nothing you dismay,
For Jesus Christ, our Saviour,
Was born upon this day;
To save us all from Satan's power,
When we were gone astray.
O tidings of comfort and joy,
For Jesus Christ, our Saviour, was born
on Christmas Day.

In Bethlehem, in Jewry
  This blessed babe was born,
And laid within a manger
  Upon this blessed morn;
The which his mother Mary
  Nothing did take in scorn.
    O tidings, etc.

From God, our Heavenly Father,
  A blessed Angel came,
And unto certain shepherds
  Brought tidings of the same;
How that in Bethlehem was born
  The Son of God by name.
    O tidings, etc.

"Fear not," then said the Angel,
  "Let nothing you affright,
This day is born a Saviour,
  Of virtue, power, and might,
So frequently to vanish all
  The friends of Satan quite."
    O tidings, etc.

The shepherds, at those tidings,
Rejoiced much in mind,
And left their flocks a-feeding
In tempest, storm, and wind,
And went to Bethlehem straightway
The Son of God to find.
O tidings, etc.

But when to Bethlehem they came,
Where as this Infant lay,
They found him in a manger,
Where oxen feed on hay,
His mother Mary kneeling
Unto the Lord did pray.
O tidings, etc.

Now to the Lord sing praises,
All you within this place,
And with true love and brotherhood
Each other now embrace,
This holy tide of Christmas
All others doth deface.
O tidings, etc.[1]

[1] With regard to the text of this carol I may remark that nearly every town in England, at each succeeding Christmas, supplies us with variations. The above appeared the most genuine.

A VIRGIN MOST PURE.

[THIS carol exhibits traces of antiquity, but nothing certain regarding its history can be learned. It has enjoyed great popularity for many years, being found on nearly all single collections of carols. Throughout the West it is a great favorite. A different version from that given below occurs on an old broadside printed at Birmingham in my possession. The first verse begins:

"A virgin unspotted the prophets foretold,
Should bring forth a Saviour, which now we behold,
To be our Redeemer from death, hell, and sin,
Which Adam's transgression involved us in."]

A VIRGIN most pure, as the Prophets do tell,
Hath brought forth a Babe, as it hath befell,
To be our Redeemer from death, hell, and sin,
Which by Adam's transgression hath wrapt us all in.
Rejoice and be you merry, set sorrow aside,
Christ Jesus our Saviour was born on this tide.

In Bethlehem city, in Jewry it was,
Where Joseph and Mary together did pass,
And there to be taxed, with many one more,
For Cæsar commanded the same should be so.
Rejoice, etc.

But when they had entered the city so fair,
The number of people so mighty was there,
That Joseph and Mary, whose substance was small,
Could get in the city no lodging at all.
Rejoice, etc.

Then they were constrained in a stable to lie,
Where oxen and asses they used to tie;
Their lodging so simple, they held it no scorn,
But against the next morning our Saviour was born.
Rejoice, etc.

The King of all Glory to the world being brought,
Small store of fine linen to wrap him was brought;
When Mary had swaddled her young Son so sweet,
Within an ox manger she laid him to sleep.
Rejoice, etc.

Then God sent an Angel from heaven so high,
To certain poor shepherds in fields where they lie,
And bid them no longer in sorrow to stay,
Because that our Saviour was born on this day.
Rejoice, etc.

Then presently after, the shepherds did spy
A number of Angels appear in the sky,
Who joyfully talked, and sweetly did sing,
"To God be all Glory, our Heavenly King."
Rejoice, etc.

Three certain Wise Princes, they thought it most meet,
To lay their rich offerings at our Saviour's feet;
Then the shepherds consented, and to Bethlehem did go,
And when they came thither, they found it was so.
Rejoice, etc.

THE WORCESTERSHIRE CAROL.

[I CANNOT find this carol in any printed collection that I have examined. Hone does not mention it in his extensive list. It occurs on an old broadsheet printed at Birmingham in my collection. Apart from its exceeding grandiloquence, it will be found to contain many quaint touches and pleasing lines. The date is apparently some time during the last century.]

HOW grand and how bright,
That wonderful night,
When angels to Bethlehem came!
They burst forth like fires,
They struck their gold lyres,
And mingled their sound with the flame.

The shepherds were amazed,
The pretty lambs gazed
At darkness thus turned into light,
No voice was there heard,
From man, beast, or bird,
So sudden and solemn the sight.

And then when the sound
Re-echoed around,

The hills and the dales all awoke,
The moon and the stars
Stopt their fiery ears,
And listened while Gabriel spoke:

"I bring you," said he,
"From the glorious tree,
A message both gladsome and good,
The Saviour is come
To the world as his home,
But he lies in a manger of wood."

At mention of this,
The source of all bliss,
The angels sang loudly and long,
They soared to the sky,
Beyond mortal eye,
But left us the words of their song:

"All glory to God,
Who laid by his rod,
To smile on the world through his Son,
And peace be on earth,
For this wonderful birth
Most wonderful conquests has won.

"And good will to man,
Though his life's but a span,
And his soul all sinful and vile."
Then pray, Christians, pray,
And let Christmas Day
Have a tear as well as a smile.

COME REJOICE, ALL GOOD CHRISTIANS.

[APART from their antiquity, the quaint simplicity of these lines is again the only recommendation that can be urged for giving them a place in this collection. This carol, which has long been a favorite, may be met with in most popular or street collections at the festive season.]

COME rejoice, all good Christians,
And rejoice now, I pray,
For joy our Redeemer
Was born on this day,
In the city of David,
At a cottage so poor:
Then rejoice and be you merry,
We have blessings in store.
And therefore be you merry,
Rejoice and be you merry,
Set sorrows away,
Christ Jesus, our Saviour,
Was born on this day.

Our Lord he was born
  Of a Virgin most pure,
Within a poor stable
  Both safe and secure.
He was guarded most safely
  With Angels so bright,
Who told three poor Shepherds
  Those things in the night.
    And therefore, etc.

They said, "Be not fearful,
  But to Bethlehem go;
Then rejoice and be cheerful
  For 'tis certainly so.
For a young son to Joseph
  Is in Bethlehem born,
Then rejoice, all good Christians,
  And cease for to mourn.
    And therefore, etc.

And when those three Shepherds
  Did to Bethlehem come,
And arrived at the Stable,
  Then in they did run.

Where they found blessed Mary
With Jesus her Son:
There they found our Lord sleeping,
And thus they begun.
And therefore, etc.

With the sweetest Hallelujah
The Heavens did rejoice,
With the Saints and the Angels,
And all with sweet voice,
Crying, "Glory and honor
To our Heavenly King!"
In the clouds of the air
Then this Host they did sing.
And therefore, etc.

Then well may we Christians,
That dwell on the earth,
Rejoice and be glad
For sweet Jesus his birth,
Who brought us salvation,
If we mind but the same:
Then let all in the nation
Sing praise to his name.
And therefore, etc.

With true zeal and honor
Let us joyfully sing,
In praise of our salvation,
To our Heavenly King:
To our Heavenly Father,
That remaineth above,
And to our dear Saviour,
That redeem'd us with love.
And therefore, etc.

THE SEVEN VIRGINS.

[THIS is another carol which has hitherto eluded the search of all collectors of such religious antiquities. The legend is extremely ancient. The line toward the end which alludes to "our king and queen" is evidently a modern interpolation. The metre, occasionally faulty, is here given just as it occurs on the original old Birmingham broadside.]

ALL under the leaves, and the leaves of life,
I met with virgins seven,
And one of them was Mary mild,
Our Lord's mother of heaven.

"O what are you seeking, you seven fair maids,
All under the leaves of life,
Come tell, come tell, what seek you,
All under the leaves of life?"

"We're seeking for no leaves, Thomas,
But for a friend of thine,
We're seeking for sweet Jesus Christ,
To be our guide and thine."

"Go down, go down to yonder town,
And sit in the gallery,
And there you'll see sweet Jesus Christ,
Nailed to a big yew tree."

So down they went to yonder town,
As fast as foot could fall,
And many a grievous bitter tear,
From the virgins' eyes did fall.

"O peace, mother, O peace, mother,
Your weeping doth me grieve,
I must suffer this," he said,
"For Adam and for Eve."

"O mother, take you John Evangelist,
All for to be your son,
And he will comfort you sometimes,
Mother, as I have done."

"O come, thou John Evangelist,
Thou'rt welcome unto me,
But more welcome my own dear Son,
Whom I nursed on my knee."

Then he laid his head on his right shoulder,
Seeing death it struck him nigh—
"The Holy Ghost be with your soul,
I die, mother dear, I die."

O the rose, the gentle rose,
And the fennel that grows so green,
God give us grace, in every place,
To pray for our king and queen.

Furthermore for our enemies all
Our prayers they should be strong,
Amen, good Lord; your Charity
Is the ending of my song.

LAST NIGHT AS I LAY SLEEPING.

[THE old religious belief that a guardian angel was appointed to watch over each bed, and that he occasionally held intercourse with the occupant, here forms the machinery of a carol. The composition probably dates back several generations. It is now immediately taken from an old carol-sheet, never before having been included in a collection.]

LAST night as I lay sleeping,
When all my prayers were said,
With my guardian angel keeping
His watch above my head;
I heard his sweet voice caroling,
Full softly on my ear,
A song for Christian boys to sing,
For Christian men to hear.

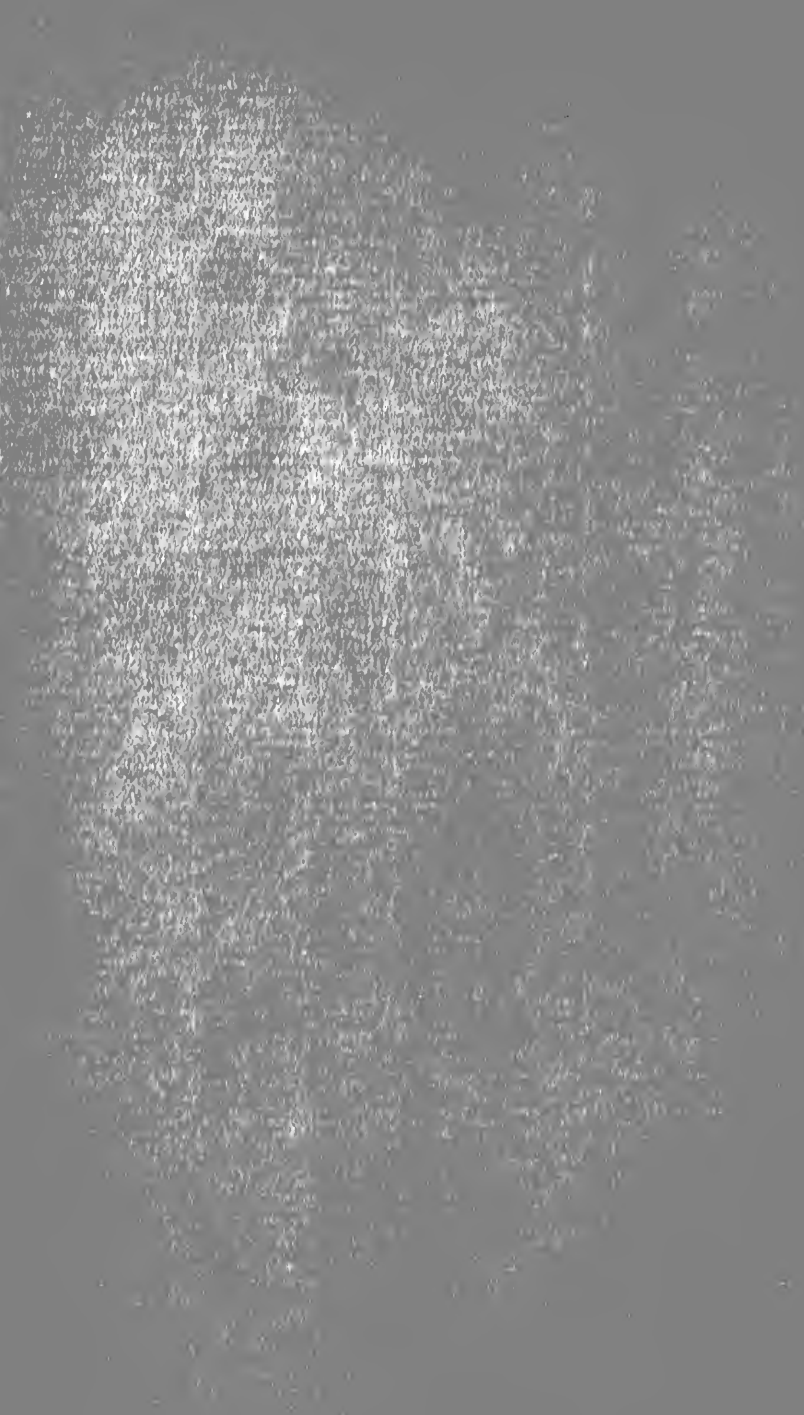
"Thy body be at rest, dear boy,
Thy soul be free from sin;
I'll shield thee from the world's annoy,
And breathe pure words within.

The holy Christmas tide is nigh,
The season of Christ's birth:
Glory be to God on high,
And peace to men on earth.

"Myself and all the heavenly host
Were keeping watch of old,
And saw the shepherds at their posts,
And all the sheep in fold.
Then told we with a joyful cry,
The tidings of Christ's birth;
Glory be to God on high,
And peace to men on earth.

"He bowed to all his Father's will,
And meek he was and lowly;
And year by year his thoughts were still
Most innocent and holy.
He did not come to strive or cry,
But ever from his birth,
Gave glory unto God on high,
And peace to men on earth.

"Like him be true, like him be pure,
Like him be full of love;
Seek not thine own, and so secure
Thine own that is above.
And still when Christmas tide draws nigh,
Sing thou of Jesus' birth:
Glory be to God on high,
And peace to men on earth."



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